

hounds bridge

A short story by Myjoy Jeremiah Harper

Haha! You don't love me. You can't. no one ever can. it doesn't matter, I don't care. I don't care at all. haha! I'm unlovable and I'm alone. The latter debases the former, the former explains the latter. There's no point!

I watched me hang me. Kiss me. I watched me at my most vulnerable. I watched me grovel and beg. I watched me kill. Always seeing myself like I'm six feet behind my back. I watched me plea to you. My only aim was you. We watched me as a kid.

Only a kid. sound in mono, everything lightly washed in white noise. A little orange or pink tone only in company with its decay. My whole life on film. My whole little life on a mile long strip. Minute long shutters: (my dog 'bean' from a pup to a husk. Her brown eyes and long ears heard and saw better than I ever could. I remember when we sold away her pups. They played on the lawn, mere feet from a wood sign advertising their being. She would whimper unendingly for days after their departure.) or: (my mom. making banana bread and yelling in the night. I would sleep and within an inch of consciousness, take up the occurrence and let it loose in my dreams. Her screams. Flower perfume. The following morning right as the sky first brightens and its quietness.) or: (gary orville park. climbing up the red plastic slide, falling dead on my left thumb and watching it turn so red and so purple. My embarrassment. I refused to tell, refused to seek help or relief from the swelling. I sat and thought about the lack of pain, how far I was from my limit. That space. There to there, I amplified. Life measured by pain and pain molded by thought.)

Every memory on camera. Like my mom right now holding up an old camcorder. "Ok, now play dead" as we sold them and I said nothing in melancholic pacifism. "Play dead" as I lay in an attempt to ignore the yelling, an attempt to reach heaven in even the meakest of pleasant senses. "Play dead" numbing me. Watching me. What was I ever doing? What am I doing now? Absolutely nothing. But. The film keeps rolling. Wasting itself on images that serve no purpose and cause no effect. I see myself sitting in this bus. Forty miles per hour down the interstate. In the bowels of the greyhound. I see me sitting completely still. Lost in thoughtless reactivity. Reacting to bodiless. formless notions. I keep eyes to the ground, what am I looking for? And as a director in my seat, behind like a viewfinder or funnel through a lens: 'you're wondering whether you made the right choice, you're frozen but the ground is absolutely magnetic! you want to fall into it, squirm on it, even melt! so you may be it. but. you're frozen.' Like the perfect actor. Simply acting all throughout life.

I was acting. When I said I loved you so much it hurt. I felt no pain but you believed me. You tried mending nonexistent wounds. You wasted your time. I knew and know that. That's why I agreed when you said we're hopeless. You and I together: hopeless. I came and left the same. I'm sorry. It's like I sucked the life out of you. It just wasn't a good time. I was acting when I held my diploma, grinning, trying not to eye any of the sergeants, lieutenants, or corporals. 'accomplished.' so smile. I was acting when I walked on this bus, carefully displaying my pass. all the way from tulsa. I act this criticism.

Shut up! This is real, it's real! it's real! I'm not an actor. I'm just living. I'm just living. Plainly, normally living. Living without you. Without my family. Without the old settings and situations which, though ignored, go on standing like the impressive stone monolith that is that wall there, without windows. My hands don't hold skin. My skin doesn't feel fingers. It's just cold. And once more before I sleep-- 'play dead!'

Deep, deeper. Swallowed by the blackness of space. It's infiltrated my skull and grown itself infinitely. The warbling of tires to asphalt weave the flat pitch of any dull air conditioner lulling and tying me. Pushes me further and further into zeroed, neutral though hostile, space. Constellations are realizations. Haha! 'Bean. Bark for me girl. Bark!'

I wake to a boston terrier yelping some twelve feet away. An old woman mutters something like 'hush laura hush' petting and pulling her gray fur. I don't know why she wails this way. We people don't understand. She stares intently at the window, so do I as to find a blotch. It moves. Crawls and flies. It's a bee! I suddenly agree in her panic and wait— stale as the spined trees and cacti. As the dust beneath the little wondrous pup's paw. As she shivers and looks to the settling face consoling her. After that second i remember. the bug's of no harm to me. And for its worth nothing at all is. I watch the bee swirl in or through the air all free and otherworldly. It lands on the side of the bus, opposite the dog and. On me. My knee. Moving up my thigh. Slowly. Fat and weightless. Buzzing sweetly. It's on my nose. It's on my nose! It's on my nose! Im allergic and its on my fucking nose! I sit still. Again harmless, cute. Its fibers tickle. A wave of happiness, derision of joy from the yellow blur. Out through the door between I, the dog and its benefactor, I, the woman and her pet. 'Where are we?' receiving an indescribable or non descript mumbling.



1324
BEWARE
of DOG



wichita, september sixth

At a bus station sixteen paces from the eisenhower airport-- I watch a big yellow plane. I must have stood so long, it's gone and blended into the sun-scorched sky. It's just clouds and sounds out here. Sharp air and the downwind of a loud plane are welcoming. I like to think feathers like this are annoying for whoever cleans airports with all the avian, bird incidents. I feel a bit like a bird. How? like i'm free and away and removed and untethered and completely, wholly independent. Like I make my own light and my own food and my own warmth and my own thoughts.

I'm not a reactionary, don't call me that. You've just put me in a situation that calls for. For drastic and abrasive and sporadic action. No, not escape! Or maybe yes escape but. But as much as a bird's westward migration is!

Staring at the phone booth. I hear myself in my head. Tell me I sound crazy, old trick. The move they all end up pulling. I don't understand.

No you're hearing with constrictions on your evaluation and objection! It can't be so hard to understand. Let me spell it out. U. n. d. o. It'll all be undone! Just ripped pages. I'm not saying I'm never coming back. I'm saying I want everything, everything that hurts there, to be mended. I can't stay and feel it all shatter around me. I can't shatter with it or you, any of you. Are you crying?

How frightening I would sound. How 'crazy.' I don't have anywhere to be. I dont have anyone to see. How folksy. I would get 'defensive to the point of offense.' Or start paying attention to what they're doing. That's why I just keep the ipod. Saves me and everyone else from so many unneeded words.

You're faking aren't you? Manipulating me. You're not? Then why whine, no i'll admit a lack of empathy when you finally admit your lack of authenticity! Faker. You fucking faker.

Force the payphone back in place, bend the wire. Maybe stand and look at the item, forget all about it. It's just ash in the air. Hahh! It's kind of cold out. My breath is heavy fog, floating away! Disappearing in the wind.

Washed away like hope from a child's dirty skin. Nullified. The call isn't even received, the point isn't even made. Cut off early. Far too young. Haha. The infantile dream! Killed like unplanned parenthood! A debt checked to god above! One little angel, one little ghost, one little air. The night sings "hope."



I'm suddenly ugly and grim. I've misused you. I used you. I see you up there, in the stars. I can't ever know whether you forgive me. While walking through an alley, entranced by a light beside a bar backdoor. The radiating, yellow light. I hear a throbbing, like calculated pulses, shakes. A harsh "growl" like from a fairytale wolf scrawled on a schoolgirl ledger. "Growl" an unfortunately fiendish doberman in a black collar tumbles out of the tin garbage bin. Gnawing on a whole, uncooked chicken. in the tussling mass, I see two gray, bandity rodents, gnawing just as well, holding it within their little fingers. The dog unlatches, is suddenly hospitable at the sight of me, out of the blue it's like it was all a rehearsal instead of a dispute between mongrels. It barks just a bit past me, the two rodents dryly sniff each other before one bellops the poultry up, then along scurrying, while the dog prances to a man in a work coat. He says "Arthur, no more playin' with those pests" motioning up as he lights the cigarette balanced on his widened bottom lip. All the while I tread slowly. Watching. Apparently ogling as he asks "what's wrong with you?" kind of jokingly, returning with the dog, into a boarding house, or barbershop, or both. Walking beside glowing asphalt, over steel-tone cement. Then diamond wire gates, blocking a strangely dipping gap of vacant land as the road hills up and connects into the highway entrance. Just across the street is a gas station and a McDonalds. Some more houses, some apartments. Good old urban sprawl. It kind of makes me want to drink. The only logical way of finding a bar, completely anti-socially, is to look. from the highest point possible. Hence, highway. Just fifty feet up. I'm made to be absolutely aware of all before me. The valley in the Wichita distance reminds me of a fun fact! I don't know where I heard this but Billy the kid was born here and his mom was almost mayor? With a stolen carriage and a small brigade of bandits behind him. . . cowboy and horse silhouettes on the black plain. . . hallucination. god more scurrying! Suddenly so close with this town. and in that instance I know the people too! I know their commutes and duties. I know where I fit and suddenly feel so unknown. And unknowing. Familiarity, the only thing I want. That, tonight, can be found in a drink and a song. Swirling my finger around, shuffling to find some kind of theme. One with a tempo and context alike my own movement, why not play us in? Right at the perfect moment, a few hundred feet and closing in on the local dive, sure to be fun time, 'the flamingos' "where or when" plays. From my ipod, through my headphones. My parent's song. The one they danced to on their wedding day. And so many other days. swaying and holding each other as the vinyl cracks, croons. As I did the same I suppose, the memory's unpleasant. For whatever reason. But the moment loops in my mind, mom and dad swaying as I look back. Walking away, they grow smaller in the black vastness. The music gets louder. Haha I say that like im not clicking the little buttons, either way; all moves on. Through a door, at a stool. Head on the counter. Before the many glistening glasses and bottles. A domineering, alluring array of translucent browns and greens against the opaque red walls— a chandelier of substance to brighten the double zero mood. I'm just fitting in. I order a smoking gun, which is whisky. Rich, sweet, kind of overcasting my mouth with the freshness of basil or tarragon and that smoky-- smooth burn. "What's your garnish?" and the bartender replies "blackberry shrub." The warm dark. I look around and two men at the second-to-last table, across from each other, chat about motorbikes. Sat along the counter, there's a woman writing between surely intriguing thoughts, raising

and lowering a notepad. A man dozing in his arms, the way sad regulars do, after conversing with the barback and the friend attempting to cheer him up. A fluttering moth entered through the inch opening between the bar and the sidewalk. Drink and drink. A few more tracks through flamingo serenade, a few less familiar and a few more unfamiliar faces. Guffaw to mood, some come in and out to the alleyway to two little tables holding card games, serious looking men slyly withhold their hands and the bartender checks in on them through the side door. One of the men, on about motorcycles, shakes hands with his cohort, sends off the bartender, and leaves.

In the cherry chestnut hardness before and fore my head-- A pool in grain like distortions of a puddle and the wood just receives my head. I bet pilots come here, or do they drink on the plane? Looking at the three glasses in front of me, just ice now, I know what I'm doing. Or what I've done.

Oh yeah. Getting fucked up. Moving in and out. Up and down.
Rolling around on the floor. feeling god in the pits of my liver. How
much is this?

I feel a little sicker as 'much' implies money as the basest of increments. The bartender says "four-fifty" no I meant how much of my life-- knowledge and experience? The door creaks and shuts. but if you'll have cash. Again the warm wind, night flowing by. The calm and quiet whirr is all its own. I get to be quietly relieved that I have no reference point for this. I get to spin around a lamp post on a street with two other people on it. no other people. I get to talk to the wind.

Yeah, he was talking to me about how old greek pathways don't
Crack like pavement does. Good today-day pavement.
The million miles. The march of step before step in countless number.
The long-long march. Over the hills, it looked like men. La grande armee!
Da-dum-da-dum-da-dum. But I don't wanna think about any of that.
I'd much rather think about the future.

Fly my fucking car, pill my fucking dinner. And the world stops spinning. It's bright outside, blue and white. A white corduroy couch, I get to lay. And turn over to see a coffee table. With forty different magazine publishers and another forty authors piling, untroubled. Where am I going to sleep tonight?

I quickly pace back. I count the steps, fifteen or thirty-six?

Where's the nearest motel?

The bartender says “down the street, a right out the door and a right on lewis street” and I follow those directions, I first repeat it intentionally. “Right door, right lewis” then fade into echoes. It's just clicking and whirring until lewis street, where at the corner of which, a little yellow sign with black lettering chants five glowing letters. M! o! t! e! l! but the echoes. The contradiction of unintentional thought. Until the door, I click and whirr around a miasmic terror. Like a fucking lion tamer in my own head. and through the door I roar! I groan.

Oh sorry, excuse me. I'd like to rent a room. One night, one bed.

The woman, behind the tiled, tinted and blurry glass, looks back from the television, diagonally across a pink half circle couch, stands and walks through the door to hear me by ‘like’ and after me, she talks like a paranoid mother. Bending her back and artificially grinning into “how can I help you?” hands me a paper with words on it, receives and resends my credit card. Waits glaring while I discern the words on this paper. Breaks the silence. “You have got to tune in to mtv tonight, they're doing some eighties reruns, earlier today they played that prince song, strawberry beret nearly fell down to my knees, can that boy sing” like beneath thirty feet of water, the bright television hardly reveals and gurgles. Down to my final signature, she skips on back to the door. Gasps. “in the middle of our street!” getting on a little groove, suddenly adorable. You're so right I have got to tune in to mtv, what channel is it? “Oh dear every room has a tv guide on the nightstand, but forty-three maybe?” an engraved key, ‘room no. 14’ “second floor second door on the right” thank you. Carpeted expanse, spinning. ‘The hall of dreams’, red wallpaper, presidents' faces in frames.

wichita, september seventh

Goodmorning Wichita. Oppression by frailty, awakening to my own defeating weakness. Usual. My eyelashes, flaring against the overcast, black-out curtain skew wichita glow. No certain season is speaking to me, but I think it's spring. And spring is just like release, when you want the world though settle with a gun or a girl. Like war though love is. An arch of darkness over the curtain, as some sound either thunder or an accident of steel bars or dusty trucks. Feeling the vibration of the bed frame: 97' bronco. Oh that's a new tacoma. No, I have no idea. Right where I placed my hand on the nightstand, the tv guide, laminated though hand written. Mtv, 43. Madonna. Lacing up before I skip to the nearest diner, that girl from last night may still be on shift. Like a wet dream, us two-- soft friction on that. . . was it green or pink suede couch? No memory, the good way. La-di-da to the gray day and the replacement for dream jeanene. She isn't on shift, what a kidding bore.

Red velvet, carrot, birthday, chocolate. Acute and laborious. Slices of cake on little porcelain plates stand turning and pointing beside the cashiers counter. Nametag: sweetie. She turns and points me to a two person table against the window. The white sky reflects long glares over sedans and station wagons. Grazed over, the grey wash of missing rolls back from my frontal lobe. Spinning the chair and leaning back: they're aligned and arrayed. I immediately wish to leave.

Walking right out of my shoes, with my shoulder on the table. On a case by case basis, gazes at the when o' clock shadows and foresights. I met a man in a laundromat in Tulsa, he sat cross-legged on a wood bench. He pointed out my fuzzy leggings. he said, to me and my mothers lacking attention. "For such things I like to think I have an eye, and miss, your daughters pants are gonna unravel by the end of the week." mom, lovingly gazing on and folding a few between the denim and t-shirts, those garments which warrant no excess care or attention. Seeing herself in the pale green dress with flower stitching once again before seeing the man-- mouthing unwarranted commentary of her daughter. A cold gaze and frown fell upon him. Just then he was chewing the sandals and shoe laces, pissing on the rug. "too much fabric softener, every year especially with the kids. . . those products kinda stop being compatible. I got a nephew dry cleaning back in Baltimore. Taught him everything he knows. No sol-vents only so-lutions." and he smiled behind the newly raised newspaper. She lit up with malformed anger. To note her disposition prior would be to convey reflections of confusion. Around divorce time, dismay held her leg, I stood away from it and her in inquisition, though rejoined later. Though one to remain in static basis, or who acts to sustain her responsibility, reprieved from silence and made aware-- she had to retort. "Your silly wool hat is covered in lint." some academic insult of the garments. Another thing I sort of miss about her right now-- the ability to insult, berate, and torment. or does that intrude? I mean to illustrate the child's suspense. Like when I brashly told her about my girlfriend, as reprieve after one of her arguments

with the fellow on the bench— then at our dining table, then in her bed. She would say in reply, obviously tiredly, emphatic nevertheless: “well you've inherited the excitable tongue.” The man I met in Tulsa looks a bit like this man sitting before me. But he’s passed right by, within one step.

Right back into my shoes as honey sets two little plates and a mug-- cheesy eggs and a blueberry muffin, flat black coffee. Glancing at her, sending off with “if you need anything” I reread her name tag. “Sweetie”. . . and my foot bends over the stone marking a car park. Instances such as this shock and thrust me. In a flash I heard a man I met in Tulsa. He called me “ditsy.” Insult though inexact and clumsy in its own, a misfortune to even think that way. Routine. Maintenance. Wichita, i can see more of that here than in Tulsa, this fourth stone marking a car park evenly placed obstructs and derails me to falling. Tripping into asphalt, I just fucking fall infinitely how about that? Haha! Onto my knee, kneeling arms in exaltation. The sun beams over the old west renovations- all clap as the scene on wichita closes, with the gray clouds and distant thunder. I skip to the bus station, in an attempt to frolic and hold closely onto the adrenaline which nullifies the feeling behind this. . . more-and-more-red image! Kneeling on the steady sidewalk. The cool humid air releases in ferrous vibrations, granulation when read through the follicles though quite truly infinitely and unknowably easy. . . im sure of its vastness and I blame that wonder alone for lifting me. I fell forward elsewhere just then. As compensation for the untheatrical nature of the wichita scene up until then, the simultaneous fall is. . . “absolutely destroyed” and clap.

I awake on the bus having mistaken a malfunctioning air conditioner for applause. i return to sleep as nothing on earth is keeping me up for a midwest road bus ride.



detroit, september eighth

Gunmen with flags march up the airport. Could've been me! though i'll be working an office job in canada. simultaneous bachelors in accounting. Simple. Absolute simplicity. Like snow falling just a gray blur, impeccably light. Always fall light. I'm sure there'll be dancing. Good dancing hopefully. Ballet. I'd be a ballerina if not an accountant and alcoholic. A dry cleaner if not ballerina. Some people regrettably follow their parents' wishes, figuratively paved paths.

As the ducks point east or westward over saint clair river. A young boy in a few coats in varied width with puffed cotton and fur, topped with a beanie, leans against the bench beside me. The ducks' feather wave with wind. So does the water, to those feathers and little brown or orange legs. "Bass" the young man standing beside the benches further end, leans over. Glancing just around me as to seem unimposing or cross eyed. I glance back. "I got that what you need, anything— a lot of shit move through this park just let me know" I reply: nothing. And i clear my throat— he searches around the area with his eyes and his inner jacket with his left hand. "Haha nothing is a paradoxical answer to say— like telling me 'silence' want me to shut up? Haha. . . I won't lie to you. I spend a lot of time on this bench, looking at the water, if you see a duck with a gold ring I know it." oh excuse me— "No, nah you're good it's not mine, you're in a park. You from here?" No. "Ohh word, I see your headphones, you got the Sony's. You like music? I got CDs, not to peddle but it's a open collection, and I like to practice" as he reaches for his bag, and I say: yes actually like. Haha. I listen to all kinds. "Aight then I got you— get on this" crouched, rummaging. Practice what? "Sales."

He then goes on, quite insightfully actually about acid rock— quicksilver messenger service. I'll download some of their stuff in Ottawa. The CD's will be the first things I set in the apartment, another little cathedral for the sky to sing into during the day and for it to hum for at night. The boxes come in four days so haha yeah— four days until im looking for a lamp on craigslist. Though currently, walking with the young man who offered to show me a little chinese food spot, I plan ahead. A week and a half until I'm setting up my office. That's how I rationalize my acceptance of this young man's offer to do angel dust. In the bathroom of the little chinese spot as the, thankfully not greasy, chow mein cools.

I really think this is the coldest I've ever been. Miracles dot the skyline. Haha. the burning yellow and white stars fall and crash right at the mountain's black edge like the greyhound strolled into a nuclear testing sight. Or some spontaneous meteor shower. Or my imagination. My eyes return to the fan turning in the ceiling— looping in the bus vent. To dispel the impression of collapse— I turn and miss the sight or the longing or the fright. Because there's always something over there. Ti- ta ti- ta, like clear marbles on

glass. That's funny actually, rain hits the roof. With that fucking vent its like theres no roof at all, to say the breeze is alike hanging my head out the window. I spring jitter— know what i mean? I hunger. . . but i definitely don't thirst god.

Chlorinated water splashing on my face as I lay dry, the memory is darkened. By my own little heart shaped shades. One with mom and dad. Hahahahaha— and what a time it would be to ask how they'd feel about my. . . non surgical taking of the needle. Fuck, every droplet is a snowflake! The damned cold holds still my crumbling, imploding, withdrawing motion— “small on a sunny day, small on a sunny day” though I feel bloated and bound in the dark, deadly aware of the approaching discomforts. Through the wrong door of withdrawal, nothing of note to my left, a driver of questionable consciousness and the long, clear road credits roll in. Yes, withdrawal— do you ever turn away and feel you've witnessed a grave scene? As if petrification were imposed on you without a source. Just then. In the stinging clouds of ephemera which argue the sensibility of sense I return to myself in languid pose. Pink sunglasses. Mom, dad, and the neighbors are around but they dont matter yet. Backyard of a mid sized house in tulsa— the pool glistened and reflected on the clouds. I was mortified and not playful with the neighbor's kid as the hole my mother's contempt for dad left. It comes on backward. He forgot the lighter fluid and he was good for such forgetfulness. When one would step inside five minutes maybe to find fluid he would simply take a half hour and return bubbly. Preferences— the perfect subject for conversation when I tell them. It's like my every feeling is concentrated into breathing. My lungs like zeppelins, I can't help but squeeze into my chest. The feeling does thankfully dissipate but I'm made aware of a familiar reduction of the sense. That typically terrifies me though I wonder where it is. . . because i'm not scared. Against the cold glass, dark blue road— come on. The severity of sense in sensitivity flitted through the night. From that few hours. in me, like a dripping faucet felt and heard, a puddle and an oceanic echo. Divers to the pool, in me when they landed— it splashed behind my eyes in minor flutters that kept me staring. Pale night deepens and white trickles become apparent, with my head five feet from scraping the road I tire— I deeply tire these days though I try not to. It approaches, further along the road which appears whiter and whiter. The part I wonder whether I'm dying, another drug that makes me wonder whether I'm dying? Bored. A bunch of people behind two glaring warm white lights and some tiny orange and red ones. A flowing neon line through the valley and up and down slopes.

There's the hole our hope left. . .
Through the skin and into a vein, microscopic.

ottawa, september ninth

The bus driver parks and pulls the key. "Gatineau Park" For a while it's scarily fine you know, walking simply thankful for having legs. And it's really scary because Ottawa's even colder than wichita. But, beginning to cultivate the delusion: I feel fine! And i'm excited, in the coming days i'll see the cathedrals and what-not, the old french architecture. I'm not excited for the local jeering, almost everyone works in government here and to do so is to know French in some capacity. . . uh je fais un peu. Only a hurdle, I've jumped my share. Bronchitis at six and nine, Sprained left arm at eleven with a cast until 12. Then I think I got more cautious, a few scraped knees maybe throughout the years. Snapping out of it, the figures across the street catch my eye. A man and woman in puffer jackets, tossing a bright frisbee. Dashing and prancing in the chase, the disc becomes a frightened fowl over the two retrievers whose blond backs slink and stretch coolly. Whose simultaneously drowsing and excited and bored and curious faces communicate calculation and contentment.